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ABSTRACT

The investigation explores the impact that changing economies have had and will continue to have upon Human Resources Development (HRD)--the collective body responsible for training and retraining labor--and from that perspective offers recommendations to improve the impact HRD has upon society. The challenge for HRD is to recognize the economic, social, and cultural changes that are occurring and to provide leadership for the quickly emerging economy to keep up with expectations being instilled in youth. Recognizing that economic projections are not sacred, HRD must further recognize that, in terms of absolute growth, jobs that are not particularly glamorous nor highly technological will show the greatest actual growth. HRD must accordingly help train for these non-technological jobs. It is cautioned that unless HRD directs long-term growth to include the training of less skilled workers, our economy and culture will be severely burdened. A table of projected employment growth from 1979 to 1990 highlights the challenge to HRD. (TRS)

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AN INVESTIGATION OF OUTCOMES RELATED TO HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ATTRIBUTED TO SOCIETAL TRANSITIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Naisbitt (1982), Toffler (1970, 1980), and other futurists clearly highlighted potential outcomes resulting from our changing economy. Movement away from industry to communication and technology, however, has more than direct economic implications. Instead, Naisbitt's ten broad "mega-shifts" (Industrial Society to an Information Society; Forced Technology to High-Tech/High-Touch; National Economy to a World Economy; Short Term to Long Term; Centralization to De-centralization; Institutional Help to Self-Help; Representa-tive Democracy to Participatory Democracy; Hierarchies to Networking; North to South, and; Either/Or to Multiple Options) are central to the need for retraining, not only of individuals, but also of organizations (Muller, 1983:27). Accordingly, the purpose of this investigation was to explore the impact changing economies have had and will continue to have upon Human Resources Development (HRD), the collective body responsible for training and retraining, and from that perspective, offer recommendations to improve the impact HRD has upon society.

CHALLENGES TO HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Paralleling the historical conflicts of Snedden, Prosser, and Dewey (Wirth, 1980:141), HRD is presented with a critical challenge: ignore events and retrench into the

familiar, or accept change and expand with the future. In light of the challenge, Bright, Simula, and Smaby (1984:2) stated that HRD is faced with the option of two paradigms: National Preeminence (retrenchment), and; Interdependent World Systems (expansion). The challenge for HRD, then, is to recognize the economic, social, and cultural changes that are occurring and to provide leadership away from individual, organizational, and national retrenchment and to the reality of the quickly emerging economy for the sake of individual, organizational, and national survival. Just as schools once provided the perfect model for survival in an industrial economy (De Bevoise, 1983:8), so too must schools, regardless of their evolving form and style, provide a model for life in a technological society. Specifically, although there is the potential for economic expansion and a corollary improvement in the quality of life because of technological change, there is no guarantee that there will be unilateral representation.

In view of recent press reports, the need for futuristic leadership by HRD is vital if equity is to be achieved. Highlighting the potential for disparity, Michel, an urban economist, was quoted as saying, "Many young adults today are worse off than their parents of the 1950's and 60's" (Lueck, 1986:1). Not only are there seeds of economic discontent, but the disparity is causing greater economic risk taking (Gabor, 1986:51)--an action loaded with potential for adverse outcomes. The problem, quite simply, is referred to by Bright, Simula, and Smaby (1984:10) as the Work Roles

Dilemma, where "society cannot provide enough legitimate roles to keep up with the expectations being instilled in the young." Supporting data from the Bureau of Labor (Warnat, 1983:6-7; Blai, 1984:235) are provided in Table 1 to highlight the challenge to HRD.

Table 1

Projected Employment Growth from 1978-1990

Occupations	Employment Growth 1978-1990	
	% Increase	No. of Jobs
Fastest Relative Growth		
1. Data processing machine mechanics	148	93,000
2. Paralegal	132	38,000
3. Computer systems analysts	108	199,000
4. Computer operators	88	148,000
5. Office machine and cash register services	81	40,000
TOTAL	105	518,000
Fastest Absolute Growth		
1. Janitors and sextons	26	672,000
2. Nurse's aides and orderlies	55	594,000
3. Sales clerks	21	591,000
4. Cashiers	36	545,000
5. Waiters and Waitresses	35	532,000
TOTAL	31	2,934,000

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Whether in private enterprise or in public education, HRD must recognize that projections about the economy are not sacrosanct. Instead, HRD must recognize that prior projections and expectations may be skewed. It is specifically suggested that although Naisbitt, Toffler, and other futurists are correct in their projections about the use of technology and the associated relative rise in technological jobs, in terms of absolute growth, jobs that are neither particularly glamorous nor highly technological will show the greatest actual growth.

Accordingly, HRD must help train not only for the highly skilled jobs, but also for the critically needed non-technological jobs previously mentioned. This recommendation is especially made after the only too revealing United Press International (1986:3A) release that 85 percent of all United States citizens are technologically illiterate, i.e., "lack a clear understanding of such technology as radiation, computer software, molecules, telephones, and the gross national product."

Although it would be politically popular and gain greater immediate funding if all efforts were directed to the production of a large cadre of computer operators and other highly skilled technological workers, HRD is cautioned to avoid the expedient and instead direct long-term growth to include the training of less skilled workers. To do otherwise would burden our economy and culture too severely.

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